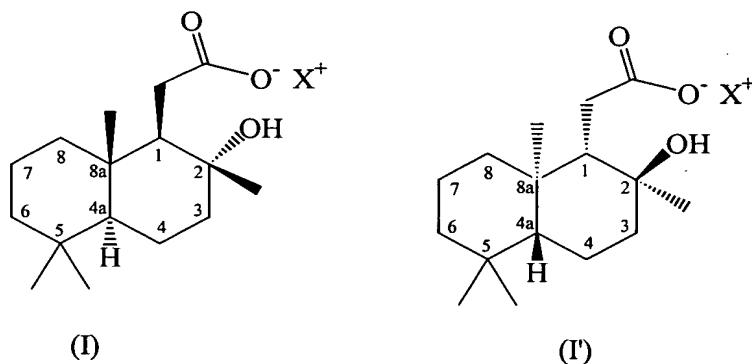


The Claims

What is claimed is:

5 1. A compound of formula (I) or (I')



wherein X represents an optically active enantiomer of (2-hydroxy-1-methyl-2-phenylethyl)methylammonium.
10

2. A process for obtaining a compound of formula (I) or (I'), as defined in claim 1, said process being characterized in that

a) it comprises the treatment of [(1RS,2RS,4aSR,8aSR)-2-hydroxy-2,5,5,8a-tetramethyldecahydronaphthalen-1-yl]acetic acid with an optically active enantiomer of 2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol, or the treatment of an alkaline salt of [(1RS,2RS,4aSR,8aSR)-2-hydroxy-2,5,5,8a-tetramethyldecahydronaphthalen-1-yl]acetic acid with an ammonium salt obtainable by the reaction of an optically active enantiomer of 2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol with an acid having a pK_a below 15 5; and
20 b) said treatment is performed in a solvent wherein the compounds of formula (I) or (I') have different solubilities.

3. A process according to claim 2, wherein the solvent is a C₆-C₉ aromatic solvents, a C₆-C₁₀ petroleum fraction or hydrocarbon, a C₁-C₂ halogenated solvent, a C₄-C₁₀ ether, a C₃-C₁₀ ester, a C₃-C₁₀ alcohol or mixtures thereof.
25

4. A process according to claim 3, wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of anhydrous tetrahydrofuran, toluene, xylene, benzene or cyclohexane.

5. A process according to claim 2, wherein the optically active enantiomer of 2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol is (1R,2R)-2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol or (1S,2S)-2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol.

6. A process according to claim 2, wherein the acid having a pK_a below 5 is selected from the group consisting of HX, wherein X is a halide, H₂SO₄, HNO₃, H₃PO₄, 10 HPF₆, HBF₄, HClO₄, C₁-C₁₀ sulphonic acids, and C₁-C₁₀ mono-, di- or tri-carboxylic acid.

7. A process for optical resolution of a compound of [(1RS,2RS,4aSR,8aSR)-2-hydroxy-2,5,5,8a-tetramethyldecahydronaphthalen-1-yl]acetic acid or an alkaline salt thereof, which comprises treating the compound with an optically active enantiomer of 2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol or an ammonium salt thereof. 15

8. A process according to claim 7, wherein the optically active enantiomer is obtainable by the reaction of an optically active enantiomer of 2-(methylamino)-1-phenyl-1-propanol with an acid having a pK_a below 5.

20 9. A process for obtaining (+)-sclareolide or (-)-sclareolide which comprises treating a compound of formula (I) or (I') respectively, defined as in claim 1, with an acid having a pK_a below 5 and by a thermal treatment at a temperature comprised between 60°C and 150°C.

25 10. A process for obtaining (+)-sclareolide or (-)-sclareolide which comprises hydrolyzing (\pm)-sclareolide into a corresponding [(1RS,2RS,4aSR,8aSR)-2-hydroxy-2,5,5,8a-tetramethyldecahydronaphthalen-1-yl]acetic acid or a salt thereof.

30 11. A process for obtaining (+)-sclareolide or (-)-sclareolide which comprises a process according to claim 2.

12. A process for obtaining (+)-sclareolide or (-)-sclareolide which comprises treating a compound of formula I or I' as defined in claim 1 as an intermediate or a starting material under conditions that favor optical resolution of the (+)-sclareolide or (-)-sclareolide.